



# Narrator's Script

## Assessing Oral Language with the *Record of Oral Language*

 This symbol indicates a special note for the leader, as well as a point to stop for discussion (including optional discussion points).

*(Select Main Presentation from the DVD menu; the file will begin running immediately and automatically advance through the presentation except where indicated in the script.)*

### Flash Frame

- 1** Welcome to the Record of Oral Language professional learning module.
- 2** When New Zealand teachers were asked what they needed to teach language, they asked for a simple way to assess children's levels of language performance. The Record of Oral Language was developed by New Zealand developmental psychologist Marie Clay and her co-authors in response to that need. It helps teachers observe, monitor, and understand changes in young children's language.
- 3** The Record of Oral Language was developed and tested in the same way as normative, standardized tests. It is recognized as a valid way of measuring a student's language development. You will be referring to your own copy of the 2007 edition of the *Record of Oral Language* book throughout this module.
- 4** This sentence repetition task places emphasis on what a child can do — and how that changes over time — so that the teacher can teach to current competencies while helping the child expand control of aspects of language in an authentic and systematic way.
- 5** The Record of Oral Language is appropriate for children 4 to 7 years of age with English as a primary language — as well as for 5 years after children begin to learn English as an additional language.
- 6** We know that oral language proficiency is important for self-expression, communication of ideas, and as a tool for thought. From Marie Clay's research, we know also that oral language proficiency contributes immensely to learning in both reading and writing. In order to help children improve their skills in using the English language, teachers need to know something about the structure of the language AND about how structure is acquired by young children. This can be especially important for children whose mother tongue is other than English.

- 7** Grammatical knowledge allows a child to construct sentences and to anticipate which way a sentence might go. We do this as listeners when we are able to almost finish a speaker's sentences. The Record of Oral Language allows teachers to examine a child's expanding control over the structures within the English language. Marie Clay's studies of oral language revealed that control of sentence structure is very important in early stages of learning to read. When teachers of early readers choose texts that are close to a child's oral language, the child can anticipate and self-monitor using what he or she knows about language.
- 8** Teachers who take running records of text reading know that children must learn to search for several sources of information in text, one of which is syntax or language structure. Analysis of running records yields valuable information about a child's use of structure when reading texts.
- 9** Be sure to read the Introduction in the *Record of Oral Language* book for more background information about the importance of oral language.
- 10** This professional learning module is presented in two parts. Part One will focus on administering, scoring, and interpreting the Record of Oral Language. Part Two will explore implications for instruction.
- 11** During the administration of the Record of Oral Language, a child is asked to repeat sentences while a teacher listens carefully and records exactly what the child says. Sentences are constructed to provide a gradient of difficulty.
- 12** Here are examples of sentences at varying levels of syntactical complexity.  
(VIDEO PLAYS)
- 13** When a child repeats sentences with a range of different syntactic structures in English, the teacher can learn about the child's control of those structures in a relatively short amount of time. The teacher can learn about structures a child is just beginning to understand but may not yet use in normal speech.
- 14** For example, let's listen to the different responses to this sentence: "That big dog over there is going to be my brother's."  
(VIDEO PLAYS)
- 15** On page 19 in your Record of Oral Language book, you will see that each sentence is identified as a type of sentence — A through G — representing a range of different syntactic structures in English. The child has two opportunities with each sentence type. A description of each type — with sample sentences — is found on pages 39-41. You will want to explore sentence types with colleagues later.
- 16** The purpose of a sentence repetition task is not merely to record items a child gets right or wrong, but to gather useful information.

**17** For example, the teacher can learn from a child's reductions or simplifications within sentences — such as omissions of phrases, words, or parts of words.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

... or from substitutions of phrases, words, or parts of words...

(VIDEO PLAYS)

... or a child's use of contractions.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

The child may also expand sentences by adding words or phrases as in this case of one additional word.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

... or transpose parts of sentences.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

A child's repetitions may reveal multiple changes.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

**18** Precisely recording a child's attempts at repetition gives the teacher an objective way of describing a child's control of oral language structures. Changes from one administration to another can also provide useful information about a child's language development over time. There are three levels of sentences for the child to repeat. You will record the child's response beneath each sentence on the record form, writing exactly what the child says. It may be useful to make an audio recording to use later when analyzing what the child was able to do.

**19** Look in your book on page 15 for examples of recording procedures. |narrator pauses| You will put a tick or check mark for every word correctly repeated. You also will write in every deviation from the original sentence. Notice that the dashes below the sentence represent omissions. Take a minute to look at the examples on page 15 in the book.

 Pause to look at examples on page 15 in book and discussion, as needed.

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**20** Now let's look at the procedures for administering the Record of Oral Language. Page 17 will help you shorten the administration procedure. Take a moment to look at page 17. |narrator pauses| You will see that there are three levels of sentences — Level 1, Level 2, and Level 3 — representing three levels of difficulty for each sentence type. By beginning with Level 2, unless you have reason to believe the child has very limited control of language, you will get information about how best to proceed with each child.

 Pause for discussion, as needed.

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- 21** Specific administration procedures are given on page 18. Follow these procedures carefully.
- Ensure a quiet place for administration so that you can hear the child's responses.
  - Build rapport with the child if you do not know him or her fairly well.
  - Then begin by using the procedure for familiarization of the process.
  - Throughout the administration, be sure that you have the child's attention, and
  - Say each sentence using phrasing, natural intonation, and appropriate pace.
-  Pause for discussion and study of procedures on page 18 in the book, as needed.  
*(click NEXT or use right arrow key to advance frame)*

- 22** If necessary, ensure that the child understands what is required of them — as shown in this example.  
(VIDEO PLAYS)  
After the teacher helped the child understand what he was to do, the administration went forward.  
(VIDEO PLAYS)

- 23** Now let's observe a video of the administration of the Record of Oral Language with Diego. You have copies of the levels sentences in your book beginning on page 19. Take time to find pages 19 through 21 in your book. |narrator pauses| Do not record the child's repetitions at this time; instead, focus on the administration procedures and the actions of the teacher and the child. You will share your observations after viewing the complete task.  
(VIDEO PLAYS)

- 24** Take time to share your observations using these suggestions.  
 Pause for groups to discuss points on screen.  
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- 25** At this time, your leader will provide a copy of Diego's responses to the levels sentences. Let's consider what the responses may mean. Look at the suggestions for analyzing the record on page 31 in your book. Take time to discuss this record by studying the kinds of responses the child found difficult.  
 Pause for time to distribute record forms and for groups to discuss Diego's records.  
*(click NEXT or use right arrow key to advance frame)*

- 26** Because Diego's score on Level 2 was between 3 and 11, the teacher then administered Level 1 and Level 3. He demonstrated control of sentence types A and D at all levels. Substitutions were generally single words that usually retained syntax. Additions, omissions, and tense changes also maintained the structure of the sentence. Diego substituted appropriate contractions for some words. He made a self-correction and worked through challenges when repeating some sentences. Phrasing was similar to that of the teacher, and repetitions were often paced faster than the teacher's pace. An English language learner, Diego appears to have good control of oral language for his age group. He may need some extra support with some structures, but he appears confident in his efforts. He is comfortable with the task.
- 27** The teacher recorded Diego's scores for each level at the bottom of each page and the total for all three levels on the last page. As you can see, Diego correctly repeated a total of 29 of the 42 sentences in Levels 1, 2, and 3.
- 28** When compared to the random sample mean on page 48 in the book, Diego is within one standard deviation above the mean.
- 29** Now let's watch another administration of the Record of Oral Language — this time with Nevaeh. Notice that the teacher is establishing rapport prior to administration. As you observe, continue to focus on the child's responses. Again, you may want to refer to the printed sentences on pages 19 to 21 in your book. You may notice that the teacher inadvertently alters one sentence. Remember that there are two sentences for each sentence type.
- (VIDEO PLAYS)
- 30** Your leader will provide Nevaeh's completed record forms for you to discuss with your colleagues. Analyze her responses as you collaborate with your colleagues. Be sure to return to page 31 for help with the analysis.
-  Pause for time to distribute record forms and for groups to discuss Nevaeh's records.
- (click NEXT or use right arrow key to advance frame)*
- 31** For Nevaeh, there was a marked difference in her control of Level 2 and Level 1 sentences. Her record does not show a clear pattern of control of specific sentence types. Although she struggled with more-complex sentences, many of her responses retained the meaning with grammatically correct simpler structures. Some substitutions were simplifications or reductions of verbs such as substituting 'will' for 'is going to' or 'was' for 'used to be.' While some verb substitutions retained the syntax of the sentence, others revealed a lack of control. The record revealed that Nevaeh does not yet control contractions and some prepositions and prepositional phrases. She was slow to respond at times and paused often. Nevaeh's total score for all three levels was 8. This score is well below the mean for the random sample given on page 48 in the book. Her teacher will need to select books carefully and offer extra language support when introducing new texts. Nevaeh will need specific support while engaging with the teacher to extend her current language competencies.

**32** In general, children with a total score below 13 have acquired only a limited control of the structures of oral English. They may have difficulty following oral instructions and understanding a story appropriate for their grade level when read to the class by the teacher. Additional opportunities should be provided for these children to extend their control of oral language. We will talk more later about how the teacher can support these children.

**33** Perhaps you noticed that all the level sentences were declarative sentences. If you know where a child begins to have difficulty on the level sentences, you can explore the child's competencies further in a systematic way by using the diagnostic sentences that begin on page 25.

The diagnostic sentences include imperative sentences, questions, negative sentences, or sentences with additional phrases and clauses to increase sentence complexity. Look at the diagnostic sentences beginning on page 25.

 Pause for time to locate pages 25-29 and for discussion, as needed.

*(click NEXT or use right arrow key to advance frame)*

**34** Let's look at some examples of the diagnostic sentences. These sentences can add to the information you already have about a child's control of structures. We'll begin with imperative sentences, generally the easiest sentence form for young children.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

Declarative statements can also be transformed into questions.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

The diagnostic sentences also include negative statements.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

To increase syntactic complexity, phrases were added to simple sentences.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

The diagnostic sentences also include statements with relative and adverbial clauses added.

(VIDEO PLAYS)

**35** Information from the diagnostic sentences may be used to explore some hypotheses about the structures that may be challenging for a child. And remember, any new type of sentence a child attempts shows increasing complexity, even if it is only partially correct.

**36** In Part One, we explored the purposes and procedures for administering the Record of Oral Language. We had an opportunity to observe administrations with Diego and Nevaeh, and to analyze their records. Now it's time to consider ways to use the Record of Oral Language as a guide for action.

 This is the end of Part One.

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- 37** In Part Two, we will consider some implications for instruction. Results of the Record of Oral Language provide a basis for selecting children whose language development requires special attention. Teachers are invited to explore ways to help these children develop control of language structures.
- 38** Based on the Record of Oral Language results, you as the teacher can think of children as falling into three groups:
- Those who bring rich language to reading and writing tasks
  - Those with average skills who need attention to ensure that their oral language skills increase as language demands in school increase
  - And those who need extra attention and more conversations and enriching oral language activities with a competent adult English speaker, concurrent with reading and writing in the classroom.
- All children need opportunities to talk with the teacher and with peers in a variety of classroom settings.

As you learn more about the language performance of the children you teach, what can you do to support oral language development — especially for children who may need special help? When you select books for a child, you will want to know if the book is below, a fair match with, or above his or her control of syntax. The Record of Oral Language helps you think about children operating on simple structures, those working on average-for-age structures, and those who control more-complex structures. This information will be useful in making book choices for individual children.

The Record of Oral Language also will help you think about introducing a new book — especially to a child who — for whatever reason — does not have good control of language. You can give the child opportunities to hear and use new structures and concepts that will be needed when reading the text. Talking with the child about what to write is another way to support language development and expand structures.

- 39** An article by Marie Clay — “Talking, Reading and Writing” in the Spring 2004 issue of *The Journal of Reading Recovery* — provides many helpful suggestions for increasing a child’s control over the structures of language.
- 40** *The Record of Oral Language* book also provides many suggestions. Look at the questions at the bottom of page 22 and the top of page 23. Take time to discuss possibilities with your colleagues.
-  Pause for time to locate pages 22 and 23 in book and for discussion.  
(click NEXT or use right arrow key to advance frame)
- 41** Now go to Chapter 2, beginning on page 31, to find several guidelines for action. |narrator pauses| It will be important to discuss these specific guidelines with your colleagues and to try them with students as appropriate.
-  Pause for time to discuss guidelines.  
(click NEXT or use right arrow key to advance frame)

**42** Guideline #8 on page 34 is a particularly critical one — using the levels sentences to check on a child’s progress over time. The Record of Oral Language can be administered at intervals of 6 months, giving teachers a way of measuring growth.

**43** What about children who speak with non-standard or variant dialects? It is not helpful to consider the use of a non-standard dialect to be wrong. Instead, we can help children learn another way of saying the same thing and when to use their primary dialect. We can encourage the child who is learning to adjust his or her language to the task or setting. See Chapter 3 in your book for more information about dialects.

**44** Children learning English as another language already have a growing mastery of a set of rules for their first language. Learning the structural rules or patterns of a new language will take time. These children depend on a teacher’s conversation with them in order to hear and use a different set of rules. Look at the suggestions for English language learners on pages 35–36 in your book and discuss the range of possibilities with your colleagues.

 Pause for discussion, as needed or if time permits.

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**45** In this module, we have briefly shared the purposes, procedures, and applications for the Record of Oral Language. Now, we encourage you to learn more about the nature of language development by using this tool with a number of children and discussing responses with your colleagues.

Using the levels sentences and, if needed, some diagnostic sentences will help you

- Objectively record a child’s control of particular structures,
- Group children for specific teaching,
- Guide your use of grammatical structures with certain children,
- Guide selection of texts for children to read,
- Guide your introduction to new texts, and
- Plan ways to foster the development of a child’s control of language in a systematic way.

**46** You will want to continue to use the book to help you choose appropriate language activities for particular children. And remember to discuss options and observations with your colleagues. Children gain control over the complexities of English without formal instruction in how to speak — an amazing accomplishment! So your primary concern will be fostering interest and spontaneity in oral language activities.

**47** But using the Record of Oral Language sentences will make you more aware of the range of children’s language structures, alert you to the needs of children who may require special help, and help you develop more-powerful language scaffolds.

- 48** In every conversation you have with young children, you hear the construction of oral language going on. And conversations create opportunities for expanding and refining language. You can also find evidence of a child's evolving command of language structures by observing changes in his or her writing. Marie Clay tells us that speaking, listening, writing, and reading all feed into the pool of structural possibilities in our language. Those possibilities are expanded with every opportunity a child has to talk, write, and read with a knowledgeable and supportive teacher.
- 49** Enjoy the journey as you observe changes in children's acquisition of language structures and explore teaching opportunities to enhance their current competencies.
- 50** *(transition music; announcer credits and copyright information)*
- 51** *(book publishing and distribution credits)*  
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